

Do communities count?

Washington State Board of Health

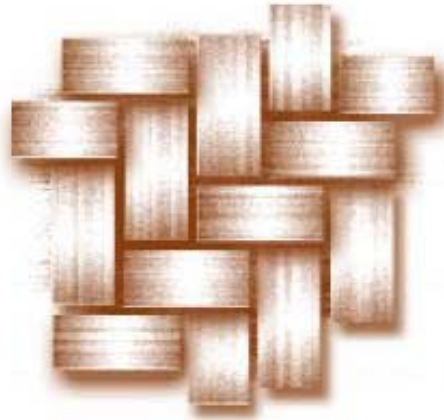
Thursday, September 11, 2002



Do Communities Count?

- Introduction of Whatcom Coalition for Healthy Communities
- ***Community Counts***
 - Development process
 - Community involvement
 - Finding indicator data
 - Creating a compelling tool
- Goals met through *Community Counts*





Whatcom Coalition
for Healthy Communities

whatcomcoalition.org

Formed as a nonprofit organization in 1996, the coalition is supported by four sponsors.



PeaceHealth
St. Joseph
Hospital



WHATCOM COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



Mission

Collaborating with the community
to ***define opportunities*** and
facilitate action to improve the
health of Whatcom County



Leadership Council

- Up to 30 people
- Community members from
 - Each sponsor organization
 - Community leaders
- All share an interest in community health



Goals

- *Catalyst* for community health
- *Mobilize* community resources
- *Link* data, resources and people
- *Measure* health improvement efforts over time
- Increase community *participation*
- Develop communication *tools*
- *Sustain* a healthy community



Community Counts

Development process

Mission, goals & values
(1996 – 1998)

Focus Group Report
(2001)

Community Counts
(2002)

Personal Attitudes
Towards Health Study
(PATH 1999 - 2000)



Personal Attitudes About Health

(PATH)

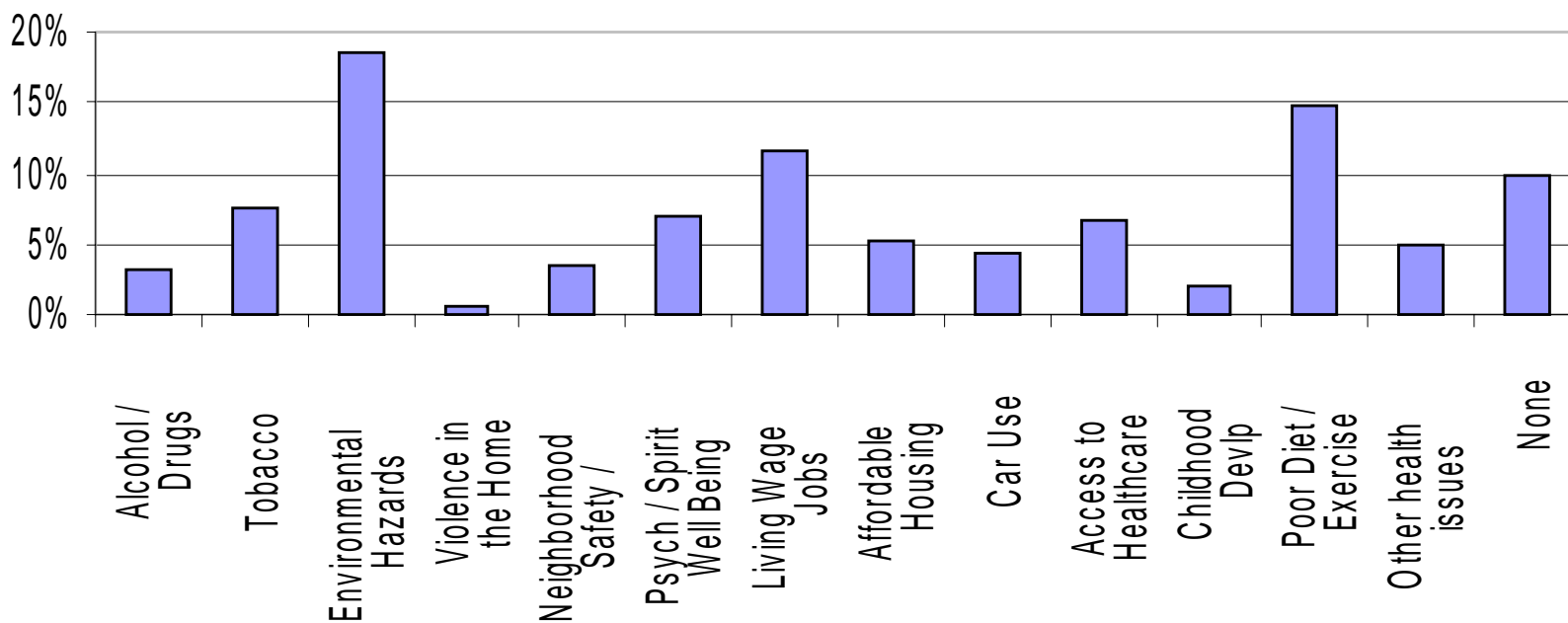
Purpose is to identify:

- priority health issues
- perceived barriers
- resources



Personal Attitudes Towards Health

PATH Survey Responses to: What issue poses the most serious threat to personal and family health?



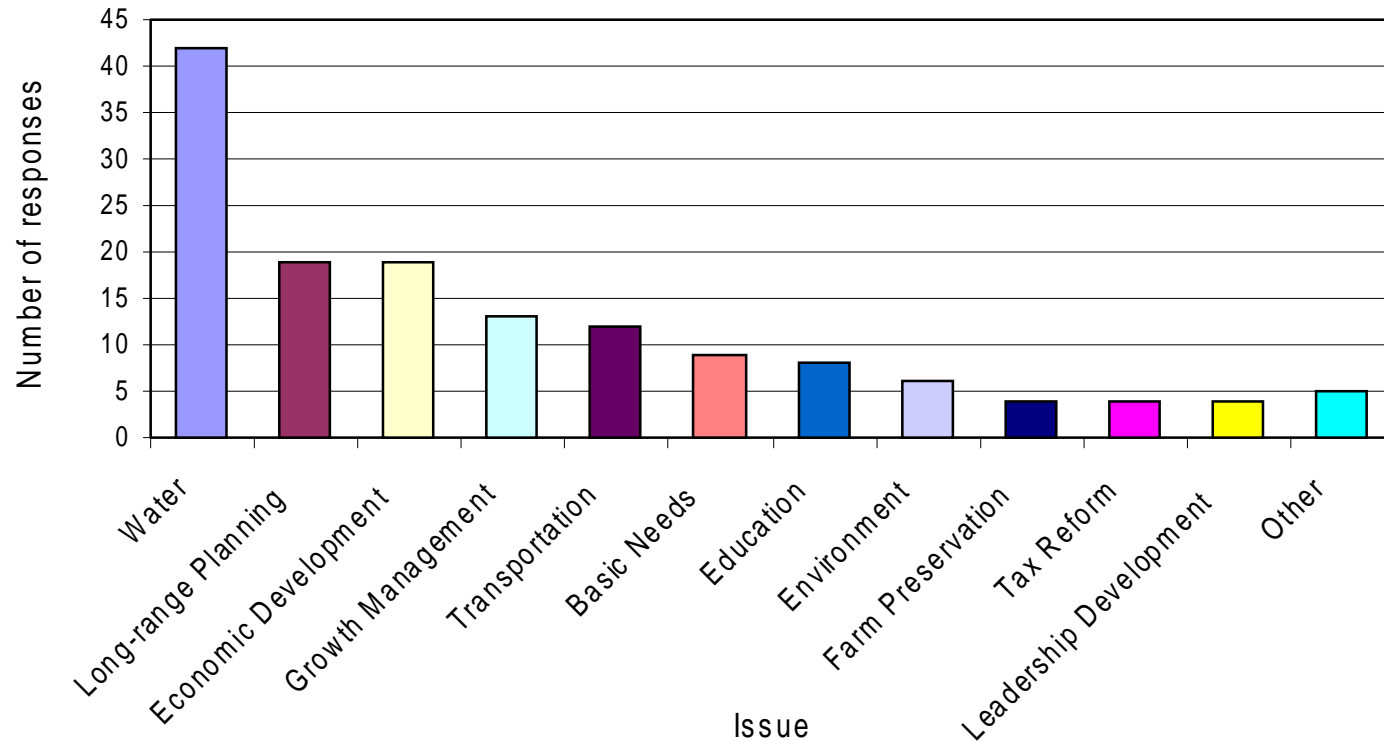
Focus Groups

A community-wide planning process to identify priority health and quality of life issues related to the economy and environment in Whatcom County



Focus Group Findings

When asked to identify one priority environmental and economic issue, participants responded with the following answers:



Focus Group Themes

- Community Changes:
- Increased Stress on Natural Resources
- Changing Economic Base

⇒ • ***Need for Information:***
As a community, we lack information

- Leadership
- Process and Product



Community Counts Partners

A collaborative project between



PeaceHealth
St. Joseph
Hospital



Whatcom Coalition
for Healthy Communities

Community Counts Goal

Measurable community health indicators that everyone could understand.



Community Counts Purpose

- Illuminate linkages among issues
- Present information in a clear and compelling format
- Help in setting community priorities
- Build participation
- Aid in developing action plans
- Provide a means to track progress



Vision Areas

Community

- Civic Engagement
 - Community Investment
-

Health

- Access
 - Prevention
 - Behaviors
-

Economy

- Income and income distribution
 - Housing affordability
-

Environment

- Air, water, soil quality
 - Conservation, preservation and restoration
-

Safety

- Community safety
 - Family safety
-

Education

- Early childhood development
- Educational attainment
- Workforce preparedness



Community Counts Process Chart

PHASE I

Large Workgroup **"Framing"**
March 2000 – December 2000

- Developed a "six vision area" framework in which to consider the interrelated aspects of community health
- Developed indicator criteria and identified pool of potential indicators
- Identified process for indicator selection



PHASE II

Steering Committee **"Filling"**
January 2001 – March 2001

- Refined framework and added indicators to the pool
- Developed scope of work for technical assistance
- Consultant engaged with Whatcom County Health Department support



PHASE III

Stakeholder **"Participatory Review"**
May 2001 – July 2001

Six groups of stakeholders to prioritize indicators and identify community-based initiatives

Vision Areas

Community	Education
Health	Economy
Safety	Environment

PHASE IV

Data Gathering/Technical Review
August – September, 2002

- Contract consultant to provide steering committee with a spreadsheet of indicator data
- Stakeholder Participatory Review input incorporated into final indicator selection by WCHC Leadership Council



PHASE V

Drafting Report
September-October, 2002



Consultant to draft report with Steering Committee and WCHC Leadership Council review



Indicator Selection Criteria

- Use existing sources of data
- Allow regional, State and national comparisons when possible
- Information should be compelling



Community Counts Format

- Use key questions
 - What was measured?
 - Why is it important?
 - How are we doing?
- Display data for comparison
- Pictures that integrate themes
- Assets that affect indicator to the good



Environment



Indicators

- Toxic releases to air, water and land
- Air Quality Index
- Impaired Waterbodies
- Residential Energy Use
- Whatcom County recycling
- Bellingham recycling

Community Assets

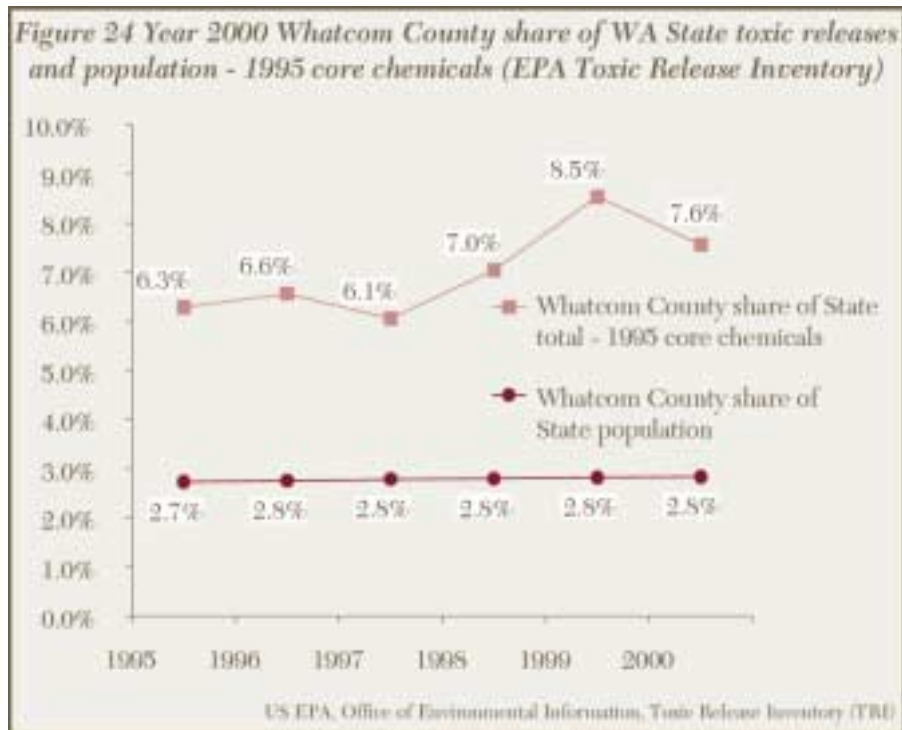
Disposal of Toxics Program

Watershed Pledge

ReSources



Toxic Releases to the Air, Water and Land



What was measured?

Releases of 527 toxic chemicals from the EPA's Toxic Release Inventory

Why is it important?

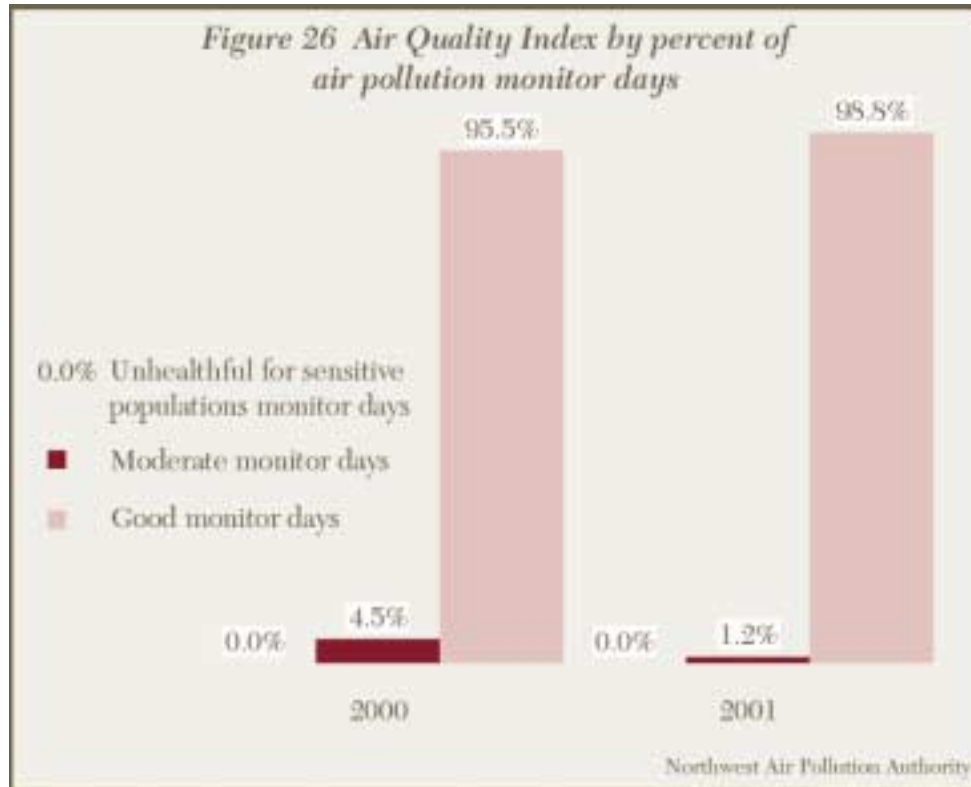
Toxic chemicals cause chronic or acute health effects

How are we doing?

Whatcom County's share has been higher than other counties



Air Quality



What was measured?

Air pollutants at monitoring stations throughout county

Why is it important?

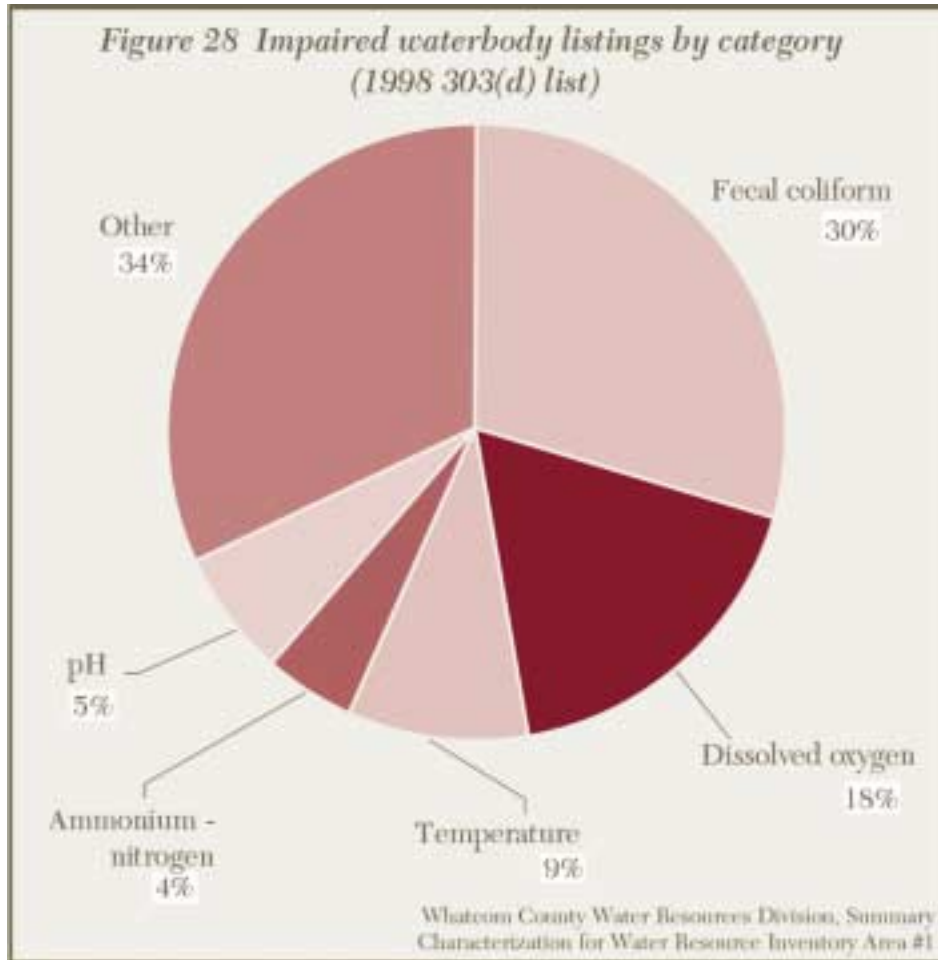
Air quality affects how we live and breathe

How are we doing?

Stations show no unhealthful days



Impaired Waterbodies



What was measured?

Types of waterbody impairment

Why is it important?

We use local lakes, streams and bays for everything from drinking to recreation

How are we doing?

The number of impaired waterbodies is increasing



Conservation, preservation and restoration



Recycling



43% of solid waste diverted

Electricity



Per Person

Water



Household use

WTA use



Second highest number
of passengers per hour
in State



7 Themes from *Community Counts*

- Growth and change
- Social capital
- Our public's health is good
- Our air and water are clean, and people care about the environment
- Our wages are low and have not kept pace with the cost of living
- Whatcom County is a relatively safe place to live and work
- Our students are doing well



Coalition Goals

- *Catalyst* for community health
- *Mobilize* community resources
- *Link* data, resources and people
- *Measure* health improvement efforts over time
- Increase community *participation*
- Develop communication *tools*
- *Sustain* a healthy community



What's next?

Make it available:

- Mail 1,000 copies to stakeholders
- Media releases – print, radio, audio
- Presentations – throughout the county
- Publish at <http://www.whatcomcoalition.org>

Use as a tool to engage a wider audience:

- Meet with community groups
- Set priorities and develop action plans
- Revisit indicators to track progress



Community indicators don't just monitor progress, *they help make it happen.*

Our community counts!

<http://www.whatcomcoalition.org>

Thank you

